

List of legendary creatures from Japan

The following is a list of demons, ghosts, *kami*, *obake*, *yōkai*, *yūrei* and other legendary creatures that are notable in Japanese folklore and mythology.

A

Abumi-guchi

A furry creature formed from the stirrup of a mounted military commander who worked for Yamata no Orochi.

Abura-akago

An infant ghost who licks the oil out of andon lamps.

Abura-sumashi

A large-headed spirit who lives on a mountain pass in Kumamoto Prefecture.

Akabeko

A red cow involved in the construction of Enzō-ji in Yanaizu, Fukushima.

Akamanto

A ghost in a red mantle that offers either red or blue toilet paper rolls in bathrooms, then kills whoever answers based on their choice.

Akaname

A spirit who licks off filth in untidy bathrooms.

Akashita

A creature that looms in a black cloud over a floodgate.

Akateko

A red child's hand dangling out of a tree, accompanied by a hypnotically beautiful woman standing beneath the tree.

Akkorokamui

A giant Ainu monster resembling a fish or octopus.

Akurojin-no-hi

A ghostly fire from Mie Prefecture.

Akubōzu

A spirit that lives in the ashes of hearths from Akita Prefecture and Iwate Prefecture.

Akugyo

An enormous species of sea monster found in the waters around Japan.

Amabie

A Japanese mermaid *yōkai*.

Amaburakosagi

A ritual-disciplinary demon from Shikoku.

Amamehagi

A ritual-disciplinary demon from Hokuriku.

Amanojaku

A small demon that instigates people into wickedness.

Amanozako

A monstrous goddess mentioned in the Kujiki.

Amazake-babaa

An old woman who asks for sweet sake and brings disease to whoever answers, whether they give her any or not.

Amefurikozō

A little boy spirit who plays in the rain.

Amemasu

An Ainu creature resembling a giant fish or whale.

Ameonna

A rain-making female spirit.

Amikiri

A net-cutting, bird-headed, crustacean-armed, snake-bodied spirit.

Amorōnagu

A female *tennyo* from the island of Amami Ōshima, who is said to bathe in pools and waterfalls in ravines.

Amaterasu

The Shinto sun goddess.

Anmo

A ritual-disciplinary demon from Iwate Prefecture.

Aoandon

The demonic spirit which arises from an *andon* lamp at the end of a *Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai*.

Aobōzu

A blue monk who kidnaps children.

Aonyōbō

A female ghost who lurks in an abandoned imperial palace.

Aosaginohi

A luminescent night heron.

Arikura-no-baba

An old woman with magical powers.

Ashimagari

A spirit which entangles the legs of travelers at night.

Ashinagatenaga

A pair of characters, one with long legs and the other with long arms.

Ayakashi

A maritime phenomenon considered to be the funayurei.

Azukiarai/Azukitogi

A spirit that washes *azuki* beans on a shoreline.

B

Bake-kujira

A ghostly whale skeleton that drifts along the coastline of Shimane Prefecture, accompanied by strange birds and fish.

Bakeneko

A shape-shifting cat spirit.

Bakezōri

A spirit inhabiting a straw sandal (zōri).

Baku

Supernatural beings that take the form of a tapir and devour dreams and nightmares.

Basan

A large fire-breathing chicken monster.

Bashōnosei

A banana tree spirit.

Betobeto-san

An invisible spirit which follows people at night, making the sound of footsteps.

Binbōgami

A spirit that brings poverty and other such misery.

Biwa-bokuboku

A biwa inhabited by a spirit.

Buruburu

A spirit which clings to people, inducing cowardice and shivering.

Byakko

The Japanese equivalent of the Chinese White Tiger.

Byōbunozoki

A tsukumogami that emerges from byōbu to spy on people.

C

Chōchinobake

A possessed chōchin lantern.

Chōchinbi

Demonic flames which appear in the footpaths between rice fields.

D

Daidarabotchi

A giant responsible for creating the geographical features of Japan.

Daitengu

The most powerful tengu, each of whom lives on a separate mountain.

Danzaburou-danuki

A bake-danuki from Sado Island.

Datsue-ba

An old woman in the Underworld who removes the clothes (or skin, if unclothed) of the dead.

Dodomeki

A female demon with long arms covered in bird's eyes.

Dōnotsura

A headless humanoid yōkai with its face on its torso.

Dōsojin

The generic name for a type of Shinto guardian or spirit, considered to be the deities of borders and paths.

E

Enenra

A monster made of smoke and darkness.

Enkō

Kappa of Shikoku and western Honshū.

F

Fūjin

The Shinto wind god.

Fūri

A monkey-like *yōkai*.

Funayūrei

The angry ghosts of people who died at sea.

Furaribi

A creature engulfed in flames that flies aimlessly.

Furutsubaki-no-rei

A soul-sucking plant.

Furu-utsubo

A beloved quiver of slain archers.

Futakuchi-onna

A two-mouthed woman.

G

Gagoze

A demon known for having attacked young priests at Gangō-ji temple.

Gaki

The perpetually-starving ghosts of especially greedy people.

Gashadokuro

A giant skeleton that is the spirit of the unburied dead. Also known as Gaikotsu.

Genbu

The Japanese equivalent of the Chinese Black Tortoise.

Goryō

The vengeful spirits of dead nobles and martyrs.

Gozu and Mezu

Two notable guards of the Underworld.

Guhin

Another name for *tengu*.

Gyūki

Another name for *Ushi-oni*.

H

Hakanohi

A fire which sprouts from the base of graves.

Hakuja no Myōjin^[1]

A white serpent deity.

Hakutaku

A yak-like beast which handed down knowledge on harmful spirits.

Hanako-san

A spirit of a young World War II-era girl who inhabits and haunts school restrooms.

Hannya

A noh mask representing a jealous female demon.

Haradashi

A creature with a giant face on its stomach.

Harionago

A woman with a thornlike barb on the tip of each strand of her hair.

Hashihime

A woman whose jealousy turned her into an evil spirit, associated with the bridge at Uji.

Heikegani

Crabs with human faces on their shells, said to be the spirits of the warriors killed in the Battle of Dan-no-ura.

Hibagon

The Japanese version of Bigfoot or the Yeti.

Hiderigami

Spirits said to bring droughts.

Hihi

A baboon-like Chinese *yōkai*.

Hikeshibaba

An old woman who extinguishes lanterns.

Hinode

The sunrise.

Hitodama

A fireball ghost that appears when someone dies, signifying the dead person's spirit.

Hitotsume-kozō

A one-eyed child spirit.

Hitotsume-nyūdō

A one-eyed monk spirit.

Hiyoribō

The spirit which stops rainfall.

Hoji

The wicked spirit of *Tamamo-no-Mae*.

Hone-onna

A skeleton woman who seeks love but brings death.

Hō-ō

The legendary Fenghuang bird of China.

Hoshi-no-Tama

A ball guarded by a *kitsune* (fox) which can give the one who obtains it power to force the *kitsune* to help them. It is said to hold some reserves of the *kitsune*'s power.

Hōsōshi

A ritual exorcist.

Hotoke

A term used to denote a deceased person.

Hyakki Yakō

The demons' night parade.

Hyōsube

A kind of kappa covered in hair.

I

Ibaraki-doji

A particularly famous offspring of an oni.

Ichiren-Bozu

Animated prayer beads.

Ikiryō

Essentially a living ghost, as it is a living person's soul outside of their body.

Ikuchi

A sea serpent that travels over boats in an arc while dripping oil.

Inugami

A dog-spirit created, worshipped, and employed by a family via sorcery.

Inugami Gyoubu

A type of bake-danuki.

Isonade

A giant shark-like sea monster with a barb-covered tail.

Issie

A lake creature similar to the Loch Ness Monster.

Itsumade

A fire-breathing birdlike monster.

Ittan-momen

A possessed roll of cotton that attempts to smother people by wrapping itself around their faces.

Iyaya

A woman whose face is reflected as that of an old man.

J

Jami

A wicked mountain spirit.

Janjanbi

Drifting fireballs named for the sound they make.

Jibakurei

A spirit that protects a specific place.

Jikininki

Ghosts of evil people, that have been condemned to eat human corpses.

Jinmenju

A tree with human-faced fruits.

Jinmenken

A human-faced dog.

Jishin-namazu

A giant catfish dwelling beneath the earth, which causes earthquakes and tsunamis when it moves. It was blamed during the Ansei earthquake and tsunami.

Jorōgumo

A spider yōkai that shapeshifts into an attractive woman to lure men in as prey.

Jatai

An animated folding-screen cloth.

Jubokko

A vampiric tree that grows on old battlefields.

K

Kahaku (河伯)

Another name for a kappa.

Kakurezato

Villages hidden deep in the mountains, where the inhabitants live peacefully and without conflict. Only those especially good of heart may stumble upon kakurezato, but cannot revisit upon leaving.

Kamaitachi

The slashing sickle-clawed weasel that haunts the mountains and rides dust devils to travel.

Kamikiri

A yōkai that secretly cuts people's hair.

Kangiten

The elephant-headed god of Bliss, comparable to Ganesha.

Kambarinyūdō

A monk spirit that spies on people while they are using the toilet.

Kameosa

A possessed sake jar.

Kanedama

A spirit that carries money.

Kappa

A famous water monster with a water-filled head and a love of cucumbers.

Karasu-tengu

A type of crow demon.

Karura

An anthropomorphic eagle akin to the Hindu Garuda.

Kasa-obake

A possessed paper-umbrella monster.

Kasha

A cart-like demon that descends from the sky, or a cat-like demon, which carries away the corpses of evildoers.

Katawaguruma

A type of wanyudo, with an anguished woman instead of a monk's head in a burning wheel.

Kawauso

River otter spirits.

Kawaakago

A river spirit that pretends to be a crying baby.

Kechibi

Fireballs with human faces inside.

Keneō

An old man seated in the underworld who weighs the clothes given to him by Datsue-ba.

Keukegen

A small dog-like creature covered entirely in long hair.

Kijimuna

Tree sprites from Okinawa that resemble red-headed small children.

Kirin

The Japanese version of the Chinese qilin, which is part dragon and part deer with antlers, fish scales and an ox's tail. Said to be a protective creature and the guardian of the metal element.

Kitsune

A fox spirit.

Kitsunebi

Flames created by a *kitsune*.

Kitsune no yomeiri

A procession of ghost lights.

Kiyohime

A woman who transformed into a serpent demon out of the rage of unrequited love.

Kodama

Spirits that lives in trees, said to be the cause of echoes.

Kokakuchō

The *ubume* bird.

Komainu

A pair of lion-dogs that guard the entrances of temples.

Konaki-jiji

A *yōkai* that disguises itself as an abandoned baby and cries until someone picks it up, then turns into a heavy stone and crushes them.

Konoha-tengu

A bird-like *tengu*.

Koromodako

An octopus-like *yōkai* that lives in the waters bordering Kyoto and Fukui.

Koropokkuru

A little person from Ainu folklore.

Kosenjōbi

Fireballs that float over former battlefields.

Kosode-no-te

A possessed *kosode*.

Kotobuki

A Japanese chimera with the head of a rat, the ears of a rabbit, the horns of an ox, the comb of a rooster, the beard of a sheep, the neck of a dragon, the back of a boar, the shoulders and belly of a tiger, the arms of a monkey, the hindquarters of a dog, and the tail of a snake.

Kubikajiri

A headless beast that stinks of blood and eats the heads of its victims.

Kuchisake-onna

The slit-mouthed woman.

Kuda-gitsune

A small fox-like animal used in sorcery.

Kudan

A cow with a human face.

Kuzuryū

A nine-headed dragon.

Kyonshii

The Japanese version of the Chinese hopping vampire, known as jiangshi.

Kumo Yōkai

A Japanese spider demon.

Kunekune

A long, slender strip of paper that wiggles on rice or barley fields during hot summers.

Kyōkotsu

A skeletal figure that emerges from a well.

Kyōrinrin

Possessed scrolls or papers.

M

Mekurabe

The multiplying skulls that menaced Taira no Kiyomori in his courtyard.

Menreiki

A spirit composed of gigaku masks.

Miage-nyūdō

A spirit that grows taller as fast as you can look up at it.

Mikaribaba

A one-eyed old woman.

Mikoshi-nyūdō

A bald goblin with an extending neck.

Misaki

A term for various high-ranking divine spirits.

Mizuchi

A dangerous water dragon.

Mokumokuren

A swarm of eyes that appear on a paper sliding door in an old building.

Momonjii

An old man who waits for travelers at every fork in the road.

Mononoke

Any mischievous and troublesome creature/entity of uncertain origin.

Morinji-no-kama

Another name for *bunbuku chagama*, the bake-danuki teakettle.

Mōryō

A general term for various water demons that eat corpses.

Mujina

A shapeshifting badger.

Myōbu

A title sometimes given to a higher-ranking kitsune.

N

Namahage

A ritual-disciplinary demon from the Oga Peninsula.

Namazu

A giant catfish dwelling beneath the earth, that causes earthquakes when it moves.

Nekomata

A malevolent cat *yōkai* with two tails.

Nikujin

A meat-person.

Ningen

An enormous white sea creature with humanoid features.

Ningyo

A fish person or mermaid.

Nobusuma

A flying squirrel-like monster (possibly inspired by the Indian giant flying squirrel).

Noderabō

Strange creatures that stand near a temple bell.

Noppera-bō

A faceless ghost that enjoys scaring people.

Nozuchi

A fat snake-like creature.

Nogitsune

A dangerous *kitsune* known to possess people.

Nue

A Japanese chimera with the head of a monkey, the body of a raccoon dog, the legs of a tiger, and a snake-headed tail. It plagued the emperor with nightmares in the Heike Monogatari.

Nukekubi

A vicious humanlike monster whose head detaches from its body, often confused with the rokurokubi, whose neck merely extends.

Nuppeppo

An animated lump of decaying human flesh.

Nure-onna

A snake-like monster with a woman's head, who appears on the seashore.

Nuribotoke

An animated corpse with blackened flesh and dangling eyeballs.

Nurikabe

A ghostly wall that traps travelers at night.

Nurarihyon

A strange character who sneaks into houses on busy evenings.

Nyūdō-bōzu

A *yōkai* that grows taller the further one looks up.

Nyūnaizuzume

Sparrows that flew from the mouth of exiled poet Fujiwara-no Sanekata.

O

Obake

Various shapeshifting spirits; also known as *bakemono*.

Obariyon

A yōkai which rides piggyback on a human victim and becomes unbearably heavy.

Oboroguruma

An oxen cart with a face in its carriage.

Oiwa

The ghost of a woman with a distorted face who was murdered by her husband. One of the most famous onryō.

Ōkaburo

A cross-dressing yōkai.

Ōgama

A giant toad which breathes rainbow-like smoke and wields a giant spear against whoever attacks it.

Ōkami

A powerful wolf spirit that either takes a person's life or protects it, depending on the actions one does in their life.

Okiku

The plate-counting ghost of a servant girl who met a tragic end.

Ōkubi

The huge face of a woman which appears in the sky, either portending disaster or causing it.

Okuri-inu

A spectral dog which follows lone travelers, attacking them if they trip. Similar to the Black dog of English folklore.

Ōmagatoki

The moment of dusk when the spirit world and the material world overlap.

Ōmukade

A giant, human-eating centipede that lives in the mountains.

Oni

The classic Japanese demon. It is an ogre-like creature which often has horns.

Onibaba

The demonic hag of Adachigahara.

Onibi

A demonic flame which sucks out the life of those who come too close to it.

Onihitokuchi

A species of one-eyed oni that kill and eat humans.

Onikuma

A bipedal bear yōkai that carries livestock out of villages at night.

Onmoraki

A bird-demon created from the spirits of freshly dead corpses.

Ōnyūdō

Wastebasket taxon for all 'priestly' demons.

Onryō

A vengeful ghost formed from powerful feelings like rage or sorrow.

Otoroshi

A hairy creature that perches on torii gates to shrines and temples.

Onmyōji

A human who has powers like those of a yōkai.

Osakabehime

An old woman *yōkai* who resides in Himeji Castle and who can read and manipulate hearts.

R

Raijin

The god of thunder.

Raijū

A doglike beast that falls to earth in a lightning bolt.

Rōjinbi

A ghostly fire that appears with an old person.

Rokurokubi

A person, usually female, whose neck can stretch indefinitely, as opposed to the *nukekubi*, whose head detaches completely.

Ryuu

The Japanese dragon.

S

Sa Gojō

The water monster Sha Wujing from Journey to the West, often interpreted in Japan as a *kappa*.

Samebito

A shark-man from the undersea Dragon Palace.

Sankai

An amorphous afterbirth spirit that takes the place of a baby if a pregnant mother is not properly cared for.

Sansei

A humanoid with a single leg twisted backwards.

Sarakazoe

A type of *onibi* that appears as a counting plate.

Satori

An ape-like creature that can read one's thoughts.

Sazae-oni

A turban snail of great age, which has gained the ability to turn into a woman.

Sesshō-seki

The poisonous "killing stones" which Tamamo-no-Mae's spirit transformed into.

Seiryū

Japanese version of the Chinese Azure Dragon.

Shachihoko

A tiger-headed fish whose image is often used in architecture.

Shibaemon-tanuki

A *bake-danuki* from Awaji Island.

Shichinin misaki

A group of seven ghosts who sicken the living, seeking to ascend to Heaven by forcing their victims to take their place.

Shidaidaka

A size-changing humanoid *yōkai* that appears above roads.

Shikigami

A spirit summoned to do the bidding of an *onmyōji*.

Shikome

Wild women sent by Izanami to harm Izanagi.

Shinigami

The Japanese version of the Grim Reaper.

Shiranui

A mysterious flame seen over the seas in Kumamoto Prefecture.

Shirime

An apparition in the shape of a man having an eye in the place of his anus.

Shirōneri

Possessed mosquito nettings or dust clothes.

Shiryō

The souls of the dead, the opposite of ikiryō.

Shisa

The Okinawan version of the *shishi*.

Shishi

The paired lion-dogs that guard the entrances of temples.

Shōjō

Red-haired sea sprites who love alcohol.

Shōkera

A creature which peeks in through the skylight of old houses.

Sōjōbō

The famous *daitengu* of Mount Kurama.

Suiko

Another name for the *kappa*.

Son Gokū

The monkey king Sun Wukong from *Journey to the West*.

Sunakake Baba

An old woman who throws sand in people's faces.

Sunekosuri

A dog-like *yōkai* that rubs up against people's legs when it is raining.

Shuten-doji

A particularly powerful *oni* lord.

Suzaku

The Japanese version of the Chinese Vermilion Bird.

Suzuri-no-tamashii

An inkstone spirit.

T

Taka-onna

A female spirit that can stretch its waist to peer inside buildings.

Tamamo-no-Mae

A wicked nine-tailed fox who appears as a courtesan.

Tanuki

The Japanese raccoon dog. In folklore, *tanuki* have the ability to shapeshift.

Teke Teke

The vengeful spirit of a slain schoolgirl, with a half upper-torso body, who goes around killing people by slicing them in half with a scythe, mimicking her own disfigurement.

Ten

A mischievous shapeshifting weasel.

Tengu

A wise demon with two variants: a red-skinned man with a long nose, or a birdlike demon.

Tenjōkudari

A female yōkai that crawls on the ceiling.

Tenka

A type of ghost lights.

Tenko

An elderly fox spirit that has reached the full extent of its power.

Tennin

The Japanese version of angels.

Te-no-me

A ghostly blind man with his eyes on his palms.

Teratsutsuki

The onryō of a man who lived in the 6th century.

Tesso

A priest who was snubbed by the emperor and became a swarm of rats which laid waste to a rival temple.

Tōfu-kozō

A yōkai that appears as a young boy carrying a plate of tofu.

Tsuchigumo

A clan of spider-like yōkai.

Tsuchinoko

A legendary serpentine monster. It is now a cryptid resembling a fat snake.

Tsukinowaguma

A legendary bear.^[2]

Tsukuyomi

The moon god.

Tsukumogami

An animated tea caddy that Matsunaga Hisahide used to bargain a peace with Oda Nobunaga. It is now understood to mean any 100-year-old inanimate object that has come to life.

Tsurube-otoshi

A monster that drops out of the tops of trees to attack and eat those who pass beneath the tree.

U

Ubume

The spirit of a woman who died in childbirth, lingering to protect the child she left behind.

Uma-no-ashi

A disembodied horse's leg which dangles from a tree and kicks passersby.

Umibōzu

A giant monster appearing on the surface of the sea.

Umi-nyōbō

A female sea monster who steals fish.

Ungaikyō

A possessed mirror that distorts all reflections into monstrous images.

Ushi-no-tokimairi

A curse cast at the ox hour (between 1 and 3 in the morning) by a black magic user, with various effects.

Ushi-oni

The name given to an assortment of ox-headed monsters.

Ushi-onna

A kimono-clad woman with a cow's head.

Ushirogami

A one-eyed, footless spirit.

Uwan

A spirit named for the sound it makes when surprising people.

W

Waira

A large beast that lurks in the mountains, about which little is known.

Wani

A water monster comparable to an alligator or crocodile. A related word has been applied to the saltwater crocodile.

Wanyūdō

A flaming wheel with a man's head in the center, that sucks out the soul of anyone who sees it.

Y

Yadōkai

Monks who have turned to mischief.

Yama-biko

Small mountain-dwelling creatures that create echoes.

Yamajiji

An old man spirit with one eye and one leg.

Yamako

An ape-like occasionally-cannibalistic creature that can read minds.

Yamaoroshi

A possessed vegetable grater, almost porcupine-like in appearance.

Yamata no Orochi

The eight-headed dragon/serpent monster slain by the god Susanoo.

Yama-inu

A dog-like mountain spirit that may appear to travelers on mountain roads. It may be friendly, or may attack and kill the traveler, depending on the tale (also see the Japanese wolf).

Yama-uba

A crone-like yōkai.

Yashima no Hage-tanuki

A *bake-danuki* that protects the Taira clan.

Yatagarasu

The three-legged crow of Amaterasu.

Yato-no-kami

Deadly snake spirits which infest fields.

Yobuko

A mountain-dwelling spirit that is said to be the reason echoes occur.

Yofune-nushi

A sea serpent that terrorized one of the OkI Islands and demanded virgin sacrifices.

Yōkai

A class of supernatural monsters, spirits, and demons in Japanese folklore. They can also be called *ayakashi* (妖怪), *mononoke* (物の怪), or *mamono*.

Yomotsu-shikome

The hags of the underworld.

Yonakinoishi

A stone from Shizuoka prefecture that is said to cry at night.

Yōsei

The Japanese word for "fairy".

Yosuzume

A mysterious bird that sings at night, sometimes indicating that the *okuri-inu* is near.

Yubaba

A witch who can shapeshift and use telekinesis.

Yuki-onna

The snow woman.

Yurei

Ghosts in a more Western sense.

Z

Zashiki-warashi

A protective childlike house spirit.

Zennyo Ryūō

A rain-making dragon.

Zorigami

An animated clock.

Zuijin

Warrior-guardian spirits that watch over shrine and temple gates.

Zunbera-bō

Another name for the *noppera-bō*.

See also

- Japanese mythology
- Kaidan

References

1. "The Oriental Economic Review" (<https://books.google.com/books?id=TSgwAAAAYAAJ&q=Hakuja+no+Myojin&pg=PA170>). Oriental Information Agency. 14 July 2018 – via Google Books.
2. Clarissa Pinkola Estés, *Women who Run with the Wolves* (1996), Ch. 12.

External links

- [Photo Dictionary of Japanese Buddhist and Shinto Deities \(http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/buddhism.shtml\)](http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/buddhism.shtml)
 - [百物語怪談会 Hyakumonogatari Kaidankai | Translated Japanese Ghost Stories and Tales of the Weird and the Strange \(https://hyakumonogatari.com\)](https://hyakumonogatari.com), a blog by Mizuki Shigeru
 - [133 Yokai Statues on Mizuki Shigeru Road \(https://en.gigazine.net/news/20081230_youkai_bronze/\)](https://en.gigazine.net/news/20081230_youkai_bronze/)
-

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=List_of_legendary_creatures_from_Japan&oldid=1079798348"

This page was last edited on 28 March 2022, at 17:40 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License 3.0; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.